

The human cost of Russia's war in Ukraine continues to grow: UK statement to the OSCE, 31 March 2022

Thank you Mr Chair. This week at the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, we heard harrowing stories from Ukrainian civil society organisations about the human impact that President Putin's premeditated and unjustified war on Ukraine has created.

Our colleagues from civil society described how they took shelter in basements during the Russian shelling that has rained down on villages, towns and cities across Ukraine. Every day the human cost of Russia's indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas continues to grow. Tragically, according to the UN over 100 children have already been killed. I am grateful also to Governor Kim for joining us today and sharing the appalling impact of Russia's invasion on his region, including the recent attack on the regional administrative building. I offer the UK's condolences to all the victims and their families.

Civil society organisations also shone a light on the dire situation in Ukrainian cities that have been encircled by Russian troops such as Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Mariupol. In an effort to break the resistance of these cities, the Russian government has stooped to new lows; effectively forcing a humanitarian crisis through constant shelling and by refusing to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to these cities. In Mariupol alone, local authorities estimate that close to 5000 people have been killed.

Yesterday many delegations had the opportunity to hear from Ukrainian speakers about the appalling human rights violations perpetrated by Russian forces in the cities under their control. The Mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, described how Russian forces abducted him in broad daylight and held him in detention for six days, where he heard evidence of torture of other detainees. Sadly, there are many other Ukrainian local government members who have been abducted by Russian forces who have not yet been released. I would like to share the names of just some of them: Serhiy Pryima, the chair of the Melitopol District Council, Olena Plaksina a member of the Tokmak town council, Viktor Mariuniak the headman of the village of Stara Zburiyivka, Mykola Masliy, a member of Kupyansk town council, and Oleksandr Medvediov, Mayor of Snovsk.

At the same event, Oleg Baturin, a journalist from Kakhovka, shared how he was held captive for eight days by Russian forces who told him that they wanted to take revenge for his journalistic activities. I am deeply grateful to the Ukrainian Ambassador for organising this meeting and to the speakers for courageously sharing their stories from yesterday.

Russia is resorting, Mr Chair, to these abhorrent tactics because they have not been able to overcome the determination of millions of Ukrainians who

look to live in a free, democratic Ukraine. These brave civilians often march carrying nothing more than Ukrainian flags and are met by tanks and Russian forces who shoot at protesters. Local government representatives, journalists, priests, civil society activists and Ukrainian military veterans are all being targeted. Appallingly, there are multiple reports of sexual violence, including rape, by Russian armed forces.

I would like to pay tribute to Ukrainian civil society organisations and their courageous members for their dedicated work in shining a light on these atrocities. Their work will help to ensure that Russia is held accountable for its actions. The cooperation between the Ukrainian Government and civil society organisations is also an example to us all of how a flourishing civil society, which is free to speak its mind, enhances a country's security – even in the gravest of circumstances.

The people and Government of the United Kingdom stand firm and resolute in our solidarity with the people of Ukraine. To that end we have provided military equipment, economic support, humanitarian aid and supported efforts to ensure accountability for war crimes – including by appointing Sir Howard Morrison QC as an independent adviser to Iryna Venediktova – to support Ukraine's journey in seeking justice against the Russian government's actions.

President Putin is attempting to hide the extent of the atrocities we have seen from his people and from the world. The Russian government spouts a barrage of disinformation, they attack television and radio infrastructure in Ukraine, block free media in Russia, and they detain journalists. Now they are trying to put an end to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission's impartial, facts-based reporting by unilaterally blocking the extension of its mandate. But, Mr Chair, as the decisive votes at the UN have shown, the international community is not fooled. The United Kingdom certainly is not fooled – no amount of disinformation or feigned pretence at troop withdrawal will distract us from what is needed to stop the bloodshed in Ukraine. Russia must end this unjustifiable war, enable humanitarian access, abide by international law and international humanitarian law, withdraw its troops and respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thank you, Mr Chair and I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

British High Commission celebrates Queen's Birthday

The grand reception will showcase the 'Best of British' food and drink, as well as highlight the role technology and innovation will play in forging a cleaner, greener, more diverse and inclusive 'Tomorrow's World'.

This year's celebration holds special significance as the UK marks Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Queen has ruled for longer than any other Monarch in British history, becoming a much loved and respected figure across the globe. The Jubilee is a central element of an exciting year of UK culture and creativity, including the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the BBC's centenary.

Alex Ellis, British High Commissioner to India, said:

Her Majesty The Queen is the UK's foremost diplomat; an incredible source of 70 years of constancy during periods of enormous social change. We pay tribute today to her exemplary devotion to a life of service and celebrate the international cooperation that she has championed throughout.

Sanjiv Mehta, Chairman and Managing Director, Hindustan Unilever Limited, said:

As a flagship British investment in India, we are delighted to be part of The Queen's birthday celebrations. Hindustan Unilever has always believed in 'Doing Well by Doing Good'. With purpose at the heart of our business, we will continue to create shared value and partner with India in its journey towards an equitable and sustainable future.

Mr. Amitabh Kant, Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog, is the guest of honour at today's celebrations. A wide range of dignitaries from the Government of India, representatives from Commonwealth nations, captains of industry, and leaders from the fields of arts, culture, and sports are also expected to attend.

Further information

Free-to-use high resolution images from the event will be uploaded [here](#).

The Queen's Birthday Party is celebrated by British Embassies and High Commissions around the world.

Her Majesty The Queen turns 96 on 21 April. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be celebrated in the UK over an extended four-day weekend in June.

Physical exhibits at the QBP today will include: The iconic London Electric Vehicle Black Cab, which also hopes to introduce their Range Extender Electric Vehicle in India; the Pavegen smart tile, which generates renewable energy using footsteps; video game developer Kwalee; British multinational toy retailer Hamleys in partnership with Reliance India; and a unique Virtual Reality Science Museum experience narrated by British astronaut Tim Peake.

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[Carol Vorderman, Peter Andre and ex-Love Islander Amber Gill back new online safety laws](#)

- Public figures line up to back the Bill after suffering from abuse online
- UK is leading the world with groundbreaking proposals to protect people online

Public figures who have suffered online abuse, including Carol Vorderman, Peter Andre and Amber Gill, have come out in support of world-leading online safety laws following an exclusive discussion recorded at the Science Museum, London.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries met with several celebrities such as Emily Clarkson, ex-footballer Anton Ferdinand, The Voice finalist Okulaja, model and influencer Fadhi Mohamed, Olympic javelin thrower Tessa Sanderson and former Love Island contestant Sharon Gaffka to discuss how new online safety laws will protect people from trolls and cyberbullying and hold tech companies to account.

The meeting is available to [watch in full online](#).

The roundtable followed the [introduction of the Online Safety Bill](#) to Parliament earlier this month – a big milestone in the journey towards making the UK's pioneering online safety laws a reality. The bill's second reading is due on Tuesday 19th of April. Other figures in attendance include Rosie Duffield MP and Deputy CEO of the Diana Award Alex Holmes.

Nadine Dorries met them at the Science Museum in Kensington to hear about their personal experiences of online abuse, harassment, trolling and the effect this can also have on their families and loved ones.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

I've heard too many horrific stories about how online trolls have

seriously impacted people's lives. I'm determined the Online Safety Bill goes as far as it can to make a difference, especially to young people.

If we don't act now, we're condemning the next generation of children being exposed online to abuse, self-harm, bullying and suicide content. No parent wants that.

The discussion focused on issues those present have personal experience of – including online bullying, parents being able to trust that their children are safe on social media, the importance of free speech online and anonymity.

Carol Vorderman said:

It's vital that the internet is safe for young people and we need to be confident they won't experience horrendous harms. I'm glad the Bill will include protections to further tackle grooming, a subject close to my heart, both now and with the new technologies of the very near future.

Peter Andre said:

Bullying when I was a kid was face to face but when people hide behind computers the impact can be even worse. These laws will help make a huge difference and hold companies to account for protecting users.

Amber Gill said:

Social media has so many positives and it should be the kind of place people can be themselves and say what they think. I want younger people to be able to enjoy it and not fear it and laws like this will bring real change.

The new laws will protect children, tackle illegal content and protect free speech, as well as requiring social media platforms to uphold their stated terms and conditions.

If they don't, the regulator Ofcom will work with platforms to ensure they comply and if they don't, it will have the power to fine companies up to ten per cent of their annual global turnover – which could reach billions of pounds – to force them to fulfil their responsibilities or even block non-compliant sites.

The Bill tackles anonymous online abuse [by giving users greater control](#) over who they interact with online and the kind of content they see. The largest platforms will have to offer verification and empowerment tools to users to

minimise exposure to trolls and other harmful content like self harm promotion or racist abuse.

In recent weeks ministers have also strengthened the Bill in a number of ways so that it goes further to protect people – including by bringing paid-for scam adverts and sites that host pornography into the scope of the Bill and making companies proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content and criminal activity quicker.

The Science Museum is home to an exhibition on the ‘Information Age’, celebrating more than 200 years of innovation in information and communication technology through the eyes of those affected by the first wave of technology, including the internet – the computer Tim Berners-Lee used to invent the World Wide Web is featured in the exhibition.

The Online Safety Bill will now further change the online landscape in the UK and set the standards for a better, safer internet.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Link to the full-length video can be found [here](#).

A full list of the attendees is as follows –

- Alex Holmes (The Diana Award)
- Amber Gill
- Anton Ferdinand
- Carol Vorderman
- Emily Clarkson
- Fadhi Mohamed
- Okulaja
- Peter Andre
- Rosie Duffield MP
- Sharon Gaffka
- Tessa Sanderson

Additional quotes from attendees:

Anton Ferdinand said:

Unless the social media companies are regulated by an independent body, then wider society and not just the blue ticks will continue to suffer from all forms of discrimination and hate. So I am happy the bill is addressing this.

Okulaja said:

Abuse on social media can't be switched off for kids today. My

experience on The Voice led to trolling that affected my family as well as me and made me passionate about speaking out – I welcome these laws.

Alex Holmes said:

At The Diana Award we know it can feel hard to escape online bullying – especially for those with protected characteristics, who research tell us are disproportionately affected by online abuse. We want to see legislation that makes that difference to keep both adults and children safe online.

Sharon Gaffka said:

I care about how young women are treated online – I don't want anyone to experience the racial abuse I've received and that's why I'm speaking up about it. Abuse is not acceptable and I hope the Bill will make this clear.

[Largest overhaul of sewer system to tackle storm sewage discharges](#)

Water companies will face strict limits on when they can use storm overflows and must completely eliminate the ecological harm any storm sewage discharges cause to the environment and significantly reduce discharges to protect public health under new plans unveiled by the Government today (31 March).

The [consultation on the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) outlines a step change in how water companies tackle the number of discharges of untreated sewage, which the Government and the public have made clear are completely unacceptable.

A growing population, Victorian infrastructure and an increase in extreme weather events has increased pressure on our sewer system, bringing the frequency of discharges to an unacceptable level.

Under the proposed plan:

- By 2035, the environmental impacts of 3,000 storm overflows (75%) affecting our most important protected sites will have been eliminated;
- By 2035, there will be 70% fewer discharges into bathing waters –(using last years figures that would have equated to 4,620 fewer discharges

into our bathing waters during the bathing season;)

- By 2040, approximately 160,000 discharges, on average, will have been eliminated (40% of the total); and by 2050, approximately 320,000 discharges, on average, will have been eliminated (80% of the total).
- The consultation outlines how water companies are expected to achieve these targets, including mapping their sewer networks, reducing surface water connections and engaging in long-term collaborative planning.

It also details how government will hold to account those companies who do not meet expectations, including a new monitoring and reporting framework as legislated for in the Environment Act which will significantly improve the ability of both Ofwat and the Environment Agency to take enforcement action where needed.

Views are sought from the public on the targets as part of a suite of measures to be considered for the final Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, which will be published in September.

The main measures under consultation are:

- Time-bound targets for water companies to achieve the complete elimination of ecological harm from storm overflows, further protect public health and limit storm overflow use;
- Details of how water companies will be expected to achieve these targets;
- An outline of wider options to reduce the strain on our sewer system, such as mandatory sustainable drainage systems; and
- Commitments to revise guidance on applying for a new bathing water designation, and to publish responses to a call for evidence on options to eliminate the use of wet wipes and ensure they are biodegradable where needed.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We are the first government to set out our expectation that that water companies must take steps to significantly reduce storm overflows. Today, we are setting specific targets to ensure that those storm overflows are used only in exceptional circumstances – delivering on our Environment Act and building on wider work on water quality.

Today's consultation follows significant action to date on tackling the critical issue of storm overflows. The Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat, in which the Government has for the first time set a clear expectation that the industry's economic regulator should prioritise action by water companies to protect the environment, is now in force.

A raft of measures have also been brought forward in the [Environment Act 2021](#) to tackle sewage discharges, including the requirement for greater transparency from water companies on their storm overflow data, meaning there

are now more protections in place for our water environment than ever before.

Between 2020 to 2025, water companies are investing £7.1 billion to protect and improve the environment. Of this, £3.1 billion is being invested specifically in storm overflow improvements. This includes £1.9 billion investment on the Thames Tideway Tunnel super sewer.

Environment Agency Chief Executive Sir James Bevan said:

Water companies need to go further and faster in tackling the damage caused by storm overflows, so these targets aimed at drastically reducing the number of harmful discharges are a welcome development.

The Environment Agency will continue to work with government, the water industry, the other regulators and the NGOs to ensure we have healthier sewers, cleaner rivers and a better environment for all.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, said:

Separating sewage from water people drink is one of the greatest public health triumphs of the last 200 years.

The discharge of raw sewage, including from storm overflows into waters used by the public, should be an exceptionally rare event and we need to take action to reduce it substantially.

The consultation is open from today for six weeks, until 12 May.

Background:

- Complete separation of sewage and rainwater systems would remove the need for storm overflows, however this would cost between £350 billion and £600 billion. It would also cause significant disruption.
 - For example, most of the combined system runs under our towns and cities and would have to be dug up. Reducing discharges to zero in an average year at all inland waters using other options, such as building storage tanks to capture excess water during heavy rainfall, would cost between £160bn and £240bn. The cost of each of these options would have an impact on consumer water bills.
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Foreign Secretary in India as part of diplomatic push on Ukraine

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is in India today (Thursday 31 March) as part of a wider diplomatic push following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine last month.

In a meeting with India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the Foreign Secretary will say Russia's invasion of Ukraine underlines the importance of democracies working closer together to deter aggressors, reduce vulnerability to coercion and strengthen global security.

She wants to counter Russia's aggression and reduce global strategic dependence on the country ahead of key NATO and G7 meetings next week.

During her trip, Truss will progress talks to develop defence-related trade, including innovative security technology, strengthening defence ties with the world's largest democracy.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Deeper ties between Britain and India will boost security in the Indo-Pacific and globally, and create jobs and opportunities in both countries.

This matters even more in the context of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and underlines the need for free democracies to work closer together in areas like defence, trade and cyber security.

India is an economic and tech powerhouse, the world's largest democracy and a great friend of Britain, and I want to build an even closer relationship between our two nations.

She will also work to deepen cyber security and defence co-operation between the two countries, and will announce a new joint cyber security programme.

The programme will aim to protect online infrastructure in both countries from attacks. India and the UK will work together to increase cyber security and carry out joint exercises to practise combatting threats from cybercriminals and ransomware.

The UK and India will also agree to closer maritime co-operation in the Indo-Pacific. The UK will join India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and become a lead partner on maritime security issues, coordinating work with key partners in Southeast Asia.

This stronger partnership on maritime security builds on the visit to India

last year by HMS Queen Elizabeth and the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) – a symbol of the UK's world leading defence capability. The CSG took part in the most demanding exercise ever undertaken between the UK and India, involving all 3 military services.

Strengthening ties with India has been a priority for the Foreign Secretary since taking up the role. This is her second trip to the country as Foreign Secretary following [her visit last October](#) and her third as a Secretary of State in 13 months.

Since the [2030 Roadmap](#) was agreed last year, the UK and India have launched free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations.

On her trip the Foreign Secretary will also confirm £70 million of British International Investment (BII) funding to support renewable energy use in India. This will help build renewable energy capacity and develop solar power in the region. She will also confirm plans for a new platform to allow British investors to bid for green infrastructure, technology, and business opportunities in India.

Current volatility in oil and gas prices and energy security concerns, as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, underscore the importance of India's green transition and move towards energy self-sufficiency.

- in May 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an historic commitment to strengthen work between the UK and India over the next decade. The new [Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the '2030 Roadmap'](#) will bring our countries, economies, and people closer together and boost cooperation in areas that matter to both countries
- the new cyber programme is part of our Enhanced Cyber Partnership, as endorsed by Prime Minister Johnson and Prime Minister Modi in the UK-India 2030 Roadmap
- the Foreign Secretary and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar will address the India-UK Strategic Futures Forum later today (Thursday, March 31) to set out their vision for the long-term relationship between the 2 countries.
- the Foreign Secretary will also confirm plans to hold the first Strategic Tech Dialogue, a ministerial-level summit on emerging technology